

115TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 3705

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

NOVEMBER 9, 2017

Received; read twice and referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs

AN ACT

To direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to require the use of certified mail and plain language in certain debt collection activities.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Veterans Fair Debt
5 Notice Act of 2017”.

6 **SEC. 2. DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS NOTICE RE-**
7 **LATING TO DEBT COLLECTION ACTIVITIES.**

8 (a) DEBT NOTIFICATION LETTERS.—The Secretary
9 of Veterans Affairs shall collaborate with veterans service
10 organizations to write a standard letter to be provided to
11 individuals who the Secretary determines owe debts to the
12 Department of Veterans Affairs. Such letter shall be writ-
13 ten in plain language and shall include a notice of the debt
14 and a clear explanation of—

15 (1) why the individual owes money to the De-
16 partment of Veterans Affairs; and

17 (2) the options available to the individual.

18 (b) DELIVERY OF LETTERS.—The Secretary shall de-
19 velop a method by which individuals may elect to receive
20 debt notification letters by electronic means and shall en-
21 sure, to the extent practicable, that the letter developed
22 under subsection (a) is delivered to intended recipients
23 who have made such an election by both standard mail
24 and by electronic means and to intended recipients who
25 have not made such an election only by standard mail.

1 (c) NOTICE TO CONGRESS.—

2 (1) NOTICE OF COMPLETION.—Upon comple-
3 tion of the letter required under subsection (a), the
4 Secretary shall submit to Congress notice of the
5 completion of the letter.

6 (2) PROGRESS REPORTS.—If the Secretary has
7 not submitted the notice required by paragraph (1)
8 by the date that is 90 days after the date of the en-
9 actment of this Act, the Secretary shall—

10 (A) submit to Congress a report describing
11 the progress of the Secretary toward imple-
12 menting subsection (a) and an explanation for
13 why the letter has not been completed; and

14 (B) every 30 days thereafter until the sub-
15 mittal of the notice required by paragraph (1),
16 submit to Congress an update to the report
17 under subparagraph (A) that includes an addi-
18 tional explanation for the failure to complete
19 the letter.

20 (d) STUDY; REPORT.—

21 (1) STUDY.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs
22 shall conduct a study on the process by which the
23 Department of Veterans Affairs notifies veterans of
24 debt collection efforts. Such study shall include—

1 (A) an analysis of the scope of the problem
2 of veterans not receiving debt collection notices;

3 (B) a description of any non-legislative ac-
4 tions the Secretary could take to reduce the
5 number of incorrect or unknown addresses of
6 veterans in the databases of the Department
7 and a timeline for adopting such actions; and

8 (C) an estimate of the costs associated
9 with sending debt collection notices by certified
10 mail.

11 (2) REPORT.—Not later than 12 months after
12 the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary
13 shall submit to Congress a report on the study con-
14 ducted under paragraph (1).

Passed the House of Representatives November 8,
2017.

Attest:

KAREN L. HAAS,

Clerk.